



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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Dear Chair Downs and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of August 2014. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Electronic Bus Shelter Signage; 2) Metrorail Station Technology; and 3) Metro's Proposed Signage Program (update).

Issues of the Month

Electronic Bus Shelter Signage

Starting at the end of 2014 Metro will begin installing approximately 800 next generation electronic display systems inside bus shelters. The purpose of the electronic display systems is to keep customers informed of transit events while in route to their destinations. The electronic signs will display three types of information: (1) estimated bus arrival, (2) transit alerts, and (3) route information that includes a jurisdiction designation. Metro can also display targeted real-time emergency messages or public service messages on the signs. The electronic signs will also have audio and a dim feature that will automatically adjust the display brightness when receiving direct sunlight. The AAC supports this initiative.

Metrorail Station Technology

The AAC increased its knowledge of station technology with a discussion of two systems in the rail station: Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) and the Kiosk Information Display System (KIDS). The purpose of the KIDS is to provide customers with major transit information, service disruptions and alerts prior to entering the station. The PIDS provide information to keep customers informed while in route to their destination. The type of information that is displayed on the PIDS is service disruption, elevator outages and shuttle bus location information, next train, and weekend closures information.

The AAC believes that, in addition to auditory announcements, Metro should provide the same announcements in a written format to scroll across the KIDS and PIDS for customers to read as part of Metro's Standard Operating Procedures. This change would enhance the access to all customers and improve the riding experience especially for customers in the Deaf community.

Metro Signage Program (Update)

The AAC received an update on Metro's proposed signage program for the Metrorail system. To accommodate a growing rail system, Metro is exploring new signage program in four main areas: Station Ahead List signs; Station Name signs; Exterior Wayfinding signs; and System Use and Tactile signs in the rail system. Collectively, the proposed signage changes are designed to improve the traveling experience for all customers. In the proposal, name signs are more prominent; the direction of the train travel is demonstrated clearly; exit information with accessible signage and elevator symbols are included; and cardinal directions are used for way-finding as opposed to the names of end stations.

While the AAC supports larger text, tactile signage, and more pervasive use of symbols for ease of readability, the Committee believes that the use of cardinal directions will be counterintuitive for many customers with disabilities and may require significant retraining of travel-trained customers who are now navigating the system successfully. If this concept is to be given any further consideration, it would have to include supporting information via clearer announcements in stations and on trains and with connecting information on PIDS. The Committee has asked staff to pursue alternatives to this approach, preferably using endpoints as the directional indicator. This is also true for elevators in that signage should not only point customers in the direction of the elevator, but also give the destination of elevator (elevator to street level Verizon Center, e.g.).

The AAC will continue to work in partnership with Metro staff to produce the most user friendly signage for customers.

Sincerely,

Patrick Sheehan
Chairman